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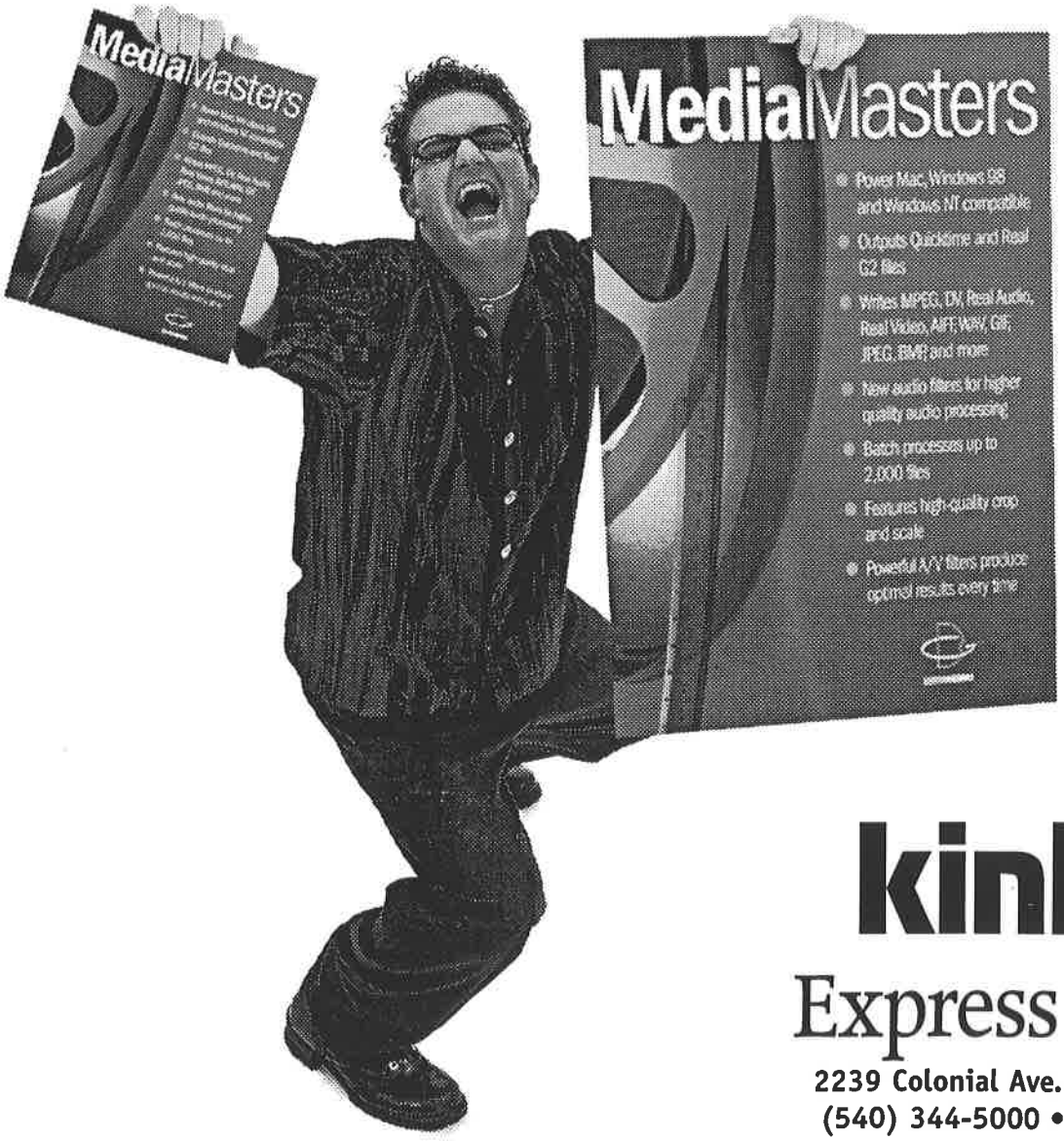
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THIS IS CHILLI PEPPERS BAR & GRILL

APRIL

10TH POETRY SLAM
12TH OPEN MIC W/ MA & PA ROSE
13TH 3 FER MADNESS
14TH CLAYTON ELLERS BAND (W/GUESTS)
15TH MITCHELL'S EDGE, AND THE FASHION SMOOTHIES
16TH YEAH WE'RE OPEN! COME GET SOME!!!
17TH POETRY SLAM
19TH OPEN MIC W/ MA & PA ROSE
20TH THE JANE DOES
21ST ECHOES FROM THE VALLEY, WITH RICHMOND'S TERMINAL BLISS
22ND 790 ROBOT HEAD, WITH RICHMOND'S PRESHUS
23RD PUNK ROCK SHOW...CALL AND CHECK
24TH C'MON...COME GET SOME, WE'RE OPEN!
25TH POETRY SLAM
26TH OPEN MIC W/ MA & PA ROSE
27TH THE FASHION SMOOTHIES
28TH LOUD CLANGIN' AND BANGIN'
29TH KRELL, RANDOM NOISE GENERATOR (AND SPECIAL GUESTS...)
30TH JUMP! COME GET SOME, WE'RE OPEN!

MAY

1ST POETRY SLAM
3RD OPEN MIC W/ MA * PA ROSE
4TH RIVER TRIP, AND SUNWISE
5TH THE HOLLOWS, AND SHAKESPACE
6TH PIPE DREAMS
7TH STUD COMPETITION!
8TH POETRY SLAM
10TH OPEN MIC W/ MA & PA ROSE
11TH KYLE ATKINS
12TH DRAG STRIP, AND HOTPLATE
13TH BLIND VISION, AND STERLING MORRISON
14TH YOU! YEAHHHHH YOU! ...COME GET SOME!
15TH POETRY SLAM
17TH OPEN MIC W/ MA & PA ROSE
18TH STEEL PLATYPUS, WITH WALTER TRIXALL ROSE
19TH LINEAGE
20TH LINEAGE
21ST AGAIN AND AGAIN! COME GET SOME!
22ND POETRY SLAM
24TH OPEN MIC W/ MA & PA ROSE
25TH WICKED JACK
26TH DOOM SYNDICATE
27TH ECHOES FROM THE VALLEY (W/ GUESTS)
28TH .... COME GET SOME!!!!
29TH POETRY SLAM
31ST OPEN MIC W/ MA & PA ROSE

19 SALEM AVENUE
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ROANOKE
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FOOD-DRINKS-SCENE

COME GET SOME!!!

BLISTER YER KNICKERS

ARSE IMITATES LIFE

By Wile E. Peyote
Soundtrack by Afghan Whigs

WELL, THAT WAS A NICE NAP... i guess.

The first thing you may notice (aside from our Lazarus Act), gentle reader, is that FENCE has shrunk. By almost half, it's true, but it's all part of the New World Order. Well, ours anyway. Since FENCE hit the streets, we've been heralded as hip, witty, cool, and just what this town needed. We have also been labeled trite, clique-ish, and trendy. The truth of the matter is that we could give a fuck. We love the accolades of course, but we do FENCE to be part of the scene, not to define it. To our supporters, we cheer and nod and hope to see our mailbox flooded with submissions and letters and ideas. To our detractors we say fuck off. Everyone is invited to this party. If we're missing something, tell us! If there's a story pass it on! Write something, Review something, do something ...but don't sit there and say we suck because you think we think you suck. Get off the fence.

But i digress...

FENCE is smaller, sure. This is an effort to make it more available more often. We think it's be better to do smaller issues more often than huge ones when we can get around to it. This means it might take us a bit longer to spotlight your band or your art, but it also means we can be alot more timely in reviewing shows and events. Some things that have slipped by us, like the Fetish Ball, various No Phase exhibitions, and touring bands can't quite be recovered, and that sucks. But things like the blooming of Chilli Peppers (on the Market) as a hot show site are things we've paid attention to. And that's not all: Did you know about the efforts of one popular "alternative" business to monopolize their trade in the valley? ...or that "scene" kids are on the way to DC to protest the WTO meetings? Stuff like that.

We'd still like to do the "Big Book", maybe twice a year, but in the meantime, look for FENCE to be a little bit smaller, but alot better off. We do have real jobs to deal with (although we'd love to drop 'em and do this full time...). FENCE will also continue to sponsor shows, plus we've got a contest in the works, and visions of a Roanoke Compilation CD before the year is up. You can quit ringin' our door bell and runnin'... we're up, already. Special thanks to everyone who asked us when FENCE was coming out every time you saw us, and thanks to our advertisers for their support, even though a smaller issue means less ads. Thanks to the Cara O'Caens. the Co-Op, Spike's, Mill Mountain Coffee & Tea, The Record Exchange, The C.I., all the Souls at the Poetry Slams, 123 Pleasant Street, and all of our 'Subscribers' for their support as well.

This is FENCE for 2thousand. Rehearsal is over.

W.E.P.

7 things you didn't know about...

the Wyld Stallyns

1. "We've only been playing our instruments for as long as we've been together (June '98), but are you really gonna get a better night's sleep because you know that now?"

2. "We're not lesbians. Just because Lindsay jokes about fucking 12-yr old girls all the time doesn't make us lesbians. When guys do it, it's funny. When girls do it that makes 'em gay."

3. "Bonnie has recorded music to Diamanda Galas' Plague Mass CD, but you wouldn't care because you don't know who Diamanda Galas is, do you?"

4. "The name Wyld Stallyns came from Bill & Ted's band, in the excellent adventure and bogus Journey movies. It's also funny because we're all girls-so technically we're supposed to be called Wyld Mares."

5. "Once Antoinette fought a girl that was picking on her little sister. The girl bit her during the fight and our drummer ended up getting a Tetanus shot."

6. "Here's an excellent dinner conversation topic: When Lindsay was a toddler, her mom invited friends over to see the baby. Upon their arrival to the child's room, the discovered that little Lindsay had proceeded to remove her diaper and was happily snacking on her own feces. You'll never see Lindsay's shit-eating grin the same way, will you?"

7. "We're not Feminists. Just because we're girls who play Rock-N-Roll does not make us Feminists. If you'd ever take the time to listen to the words of any of our songs, you'd fucking know it."

The
Wyld Stallyns are

Antoinette: Drums
Bonnie: Guitar
Lindsay: Bass

...don't harass 'em, they're locals.

Festival in the Bar set for June

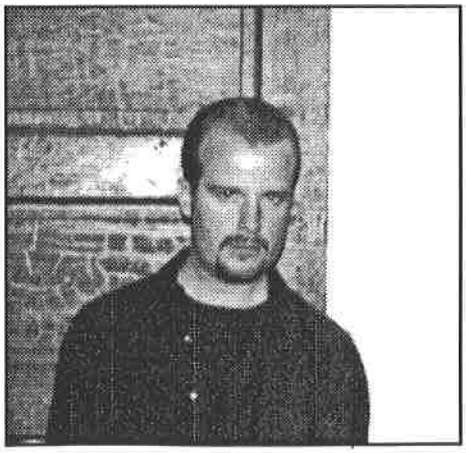
This year's No Phase art space fundraiser, **Festival In the Bar**, is set for June 10, and will be split between Highland Park and Kara O'Caen's Irish Pub, both in Roanoke.

No Phase organizers plan to stage the event in Highland Park from 10:00am until 9:00pm, including live bands, raffles, booths, poetry readings, performance art, and all manner of fun interactive stuff. The event will then continue at Kara O'Caen's until the wee hours with more bands and more drinking than can possibly be good for anyone. If you want to participate or volunteer, contact No Phase via **Safe as Milk Records** on Kirk Avenue in downtown Roanoke.

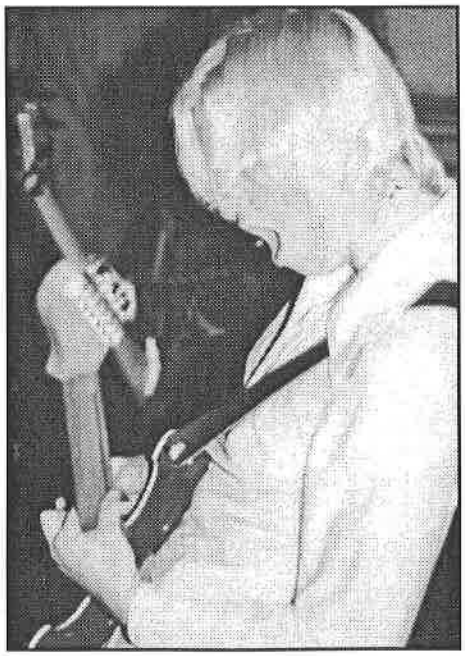
The 1999 Festival in the Bar, which was covered in the last issue of Fence, was a great success and a whole lot of fun. It raised over a thousand dollars towards establishing a permanent base for No Phase, but as this issue of Fence went to press, No Phase was still looking for a place it could call home. Expect more and better this year, and watch for flyers, posters, and future issues of Fence for fuller details.

Speaking of last year's coverage of Festival in the Bar, we actually published a picture of **Tom** from **Hotplate** playing at the show, and in the caption said it was a picture of **Tribe of Clouds**. Look, it was a long day, and the entire Fence staff was drunk as shit for most of it. Sorry, Tribe of Clouds, and sorry, Tom, here's a picture of you playing at Z101's recent birthday bash at The Rail (above).

In other news, **Shakespace** drummer **Marty Bensinger** left the band to be replaced by **Brookes Bleistel** (pictured below). Brookes' debut show at **Chilll Peppers** went great, even though he had said he wouldn't be ready to play live with the band for another couple of months. At the show, Shakespace performed with the groovy **Hollows** (picture above right), and with the mighty **Diplomats**. The Dips are currently on the road recording, and by the time this issue is out, they should be back from Memphis, broke and hungover but clutching a freshly cut pop classic. Watch out for the next issue of Fence and a special feature on Roanoke's poppiest (lead singer and guitarist **Jack Watson** is pictured below bursting a blood vessel at the Chilli Peppers gig).



Finally, thanks to the bands, and thanks to all who attended the Fence presentation of Shakespace, **Nervous Lowly** (Scott Franklin pictured right) and **The Stimulants**. The Stims came all the way from Atlanta to play at Kara O'Caen's, and put on a fab show that got everyone dancing. According to Stimulant **Sue Strathmann** (pictured below), the Stims had such a good time, they want to come and play Roanoke again. Watch this space for show details (Sue told Fence they may play Festival in the Bar; if they can't make it, then definitely at another Roanoke show).



Wait Hate

Stupid Stupid Stupid

Anyone who waits tables knows that most customers are cheap, stupid or both. Fence-reading Roanoke waitress Myra Hindley sent us her top 10 list of (true) cretinous quotations by your average cheap and stupid customer (she claims the replies are mostly imaginary, yeah right).

Idiot #1
Customer: "What size is the 14-inch pizza?
Waiter: "14 inches you pathetic dullard."

Idiot #2
Customer: "Are the steak subs hot?"
Waiter: "No, you half-wit, they're fucking freezing cold, what do you think?"

Idiot #3
Customer: "Is this the only kind of ice you have?"
Waiter: "What kind did you have in mind? Cubed, round, hollow, elephant-shaped? It's ICE you moron, get over it!"

Idiot #4
Customer: "What's the Napoleon pizza?"
Waiter: "It's NEAPOLITAN you imbecile, can't you read?"

Idiot #5
Customer: "What do you mean, you're out of pickles? Cancel the order, I'm leaving."
Waiter: "You mean to tell me you come here for the pickles? You don't need pickles. Sounds like you've got enough of them jammed up your ass!"

Idiot #6
Customer: "Not too much ice in my drink, unless it's free refills"
Waiter: "Certainly sir, you cheap motherf@cker!"

Idiot #7
Customer: "Is the drink included in the price of the buffet? No? Just give me water then."
Waiter: See #6.

Idiot #8
Customer: "Can you make sure the sub is cut in half right through?"
Waiter: "That's why I've given you a knife and fork, you lazy bastard."

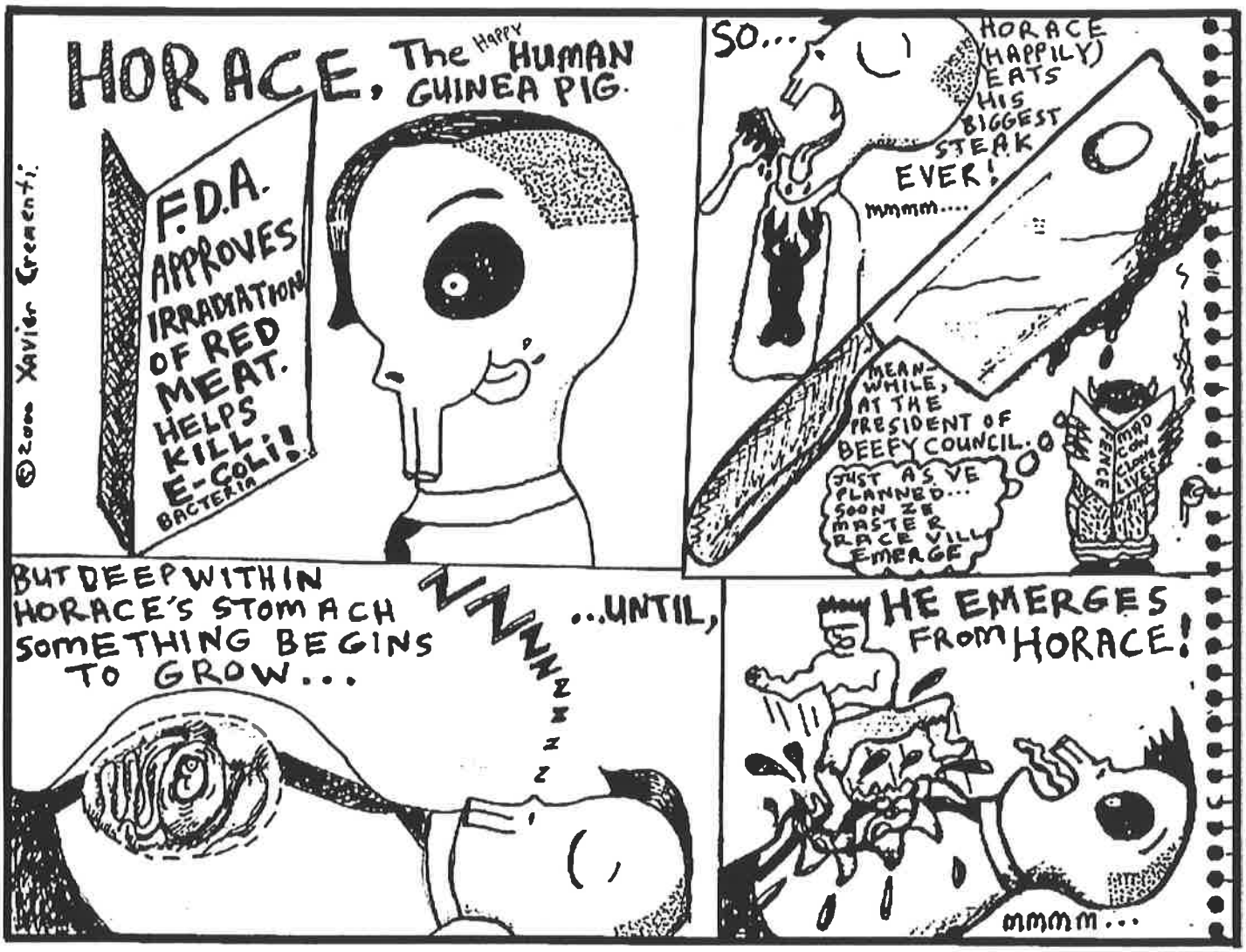
Idiot #9
Customer: "Have you got blue cheese dressing for my salad?"
Waiter: "Sorry, no. We only have fromage bleu."
Customer: "Hmm, just give me ranch."

Idiot #10
Customer (on being served a split-topping pizza): "Can you turn the pizza around so the correct half is facing the right person?"
Waiter "Fuck off. Get up off your fat asses and switch seats."

Sprecken Sie Englisch?

As if the above wasn't enough evidence that restaurant customers are mostly idiots, Ms. Hindley told Fence the following story.

It was fairly slow day, and I'd been chatting to some customers unaware someone was listening in. As I left their table, the eavesdropper beckoned me over. She wasn't one of my regular customers, so I hadn't spoken to her before this moment. She sat there grinning eagerly and, all excited, said to me: "I couldn't help but overhear you talk. Are you from Germany?" She obviously thought she had a keen ear for international accents, and was clearly hoping I'd say yes. "No," I replied, "I'm from Scotland." Looking somewhat confused, she thought very hard for a few seconds and replied: "Wow, you speak really good English."


HORACE, The Happy HUMAN GUINEA PIG.
©Zom Xavier Gregent
F.D.A. APPROVES IRRADIATION OF RED MEAT. HELPS KILL E-COLI BACTERIA!
SO...
HORACE (HAPPILY) EATS HIS BIGGEST STEAK EVER!
mmmm....
MEAN-WHILE, AT THE PRESIDENT OF BEEFY COUNCIL...
JUST AS VE PLANNED... SOON ZE MASTER RACE VILL EMERGE
MAD COW CLAIMS LIVES
FENCE
BUT DEEP WITHIN HORACE'S STOMACH SOMETHING BEGINS TO GROW...
ZZZZZZZZ
...UNTIL,
HE EMERGES FROM HORACE!
mmmm...

air sign orange

Shakespace

(CD on Happy Couples Never Last/Steady State)

Street date: May 28, 2000

See Shakespace and The Hollows
at Chilli Peppers in downtown Roanoke
on May 5, 2000

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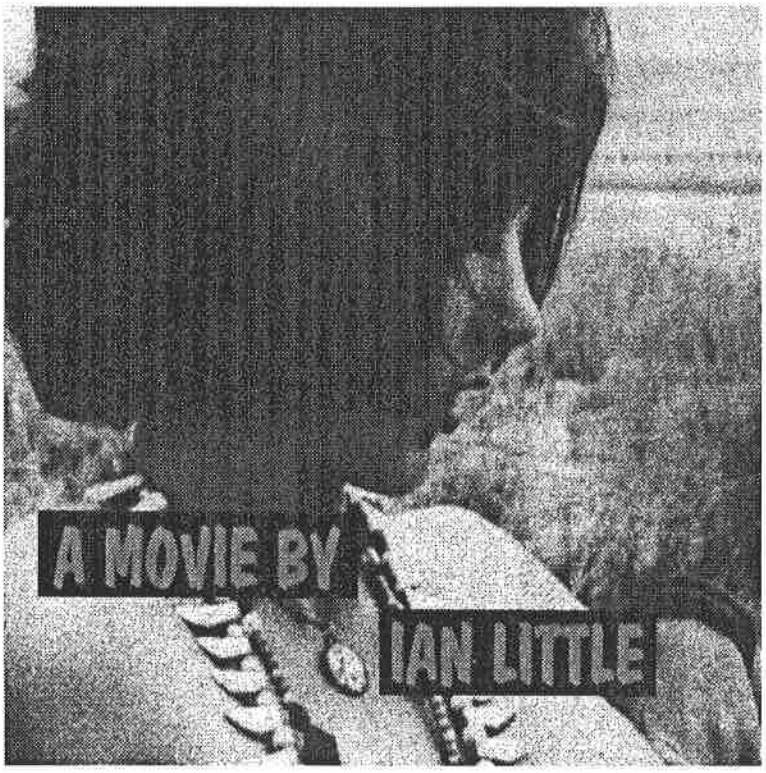
"SITUATIONAL RANT" by Jeff Mahoney

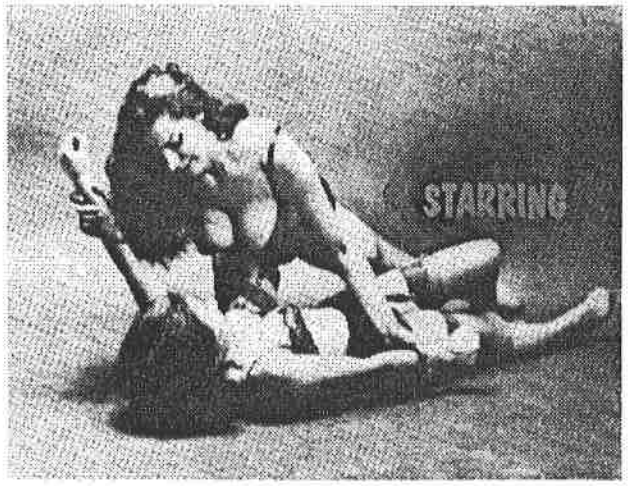
The creator of "Burning Dirt" is proud to present— the Gen-Xer who couldn't let go of the Eighties!
MÖTLEY CRÜE'S REIGN AS A VIABLE ROCK BAND WAS TRAGICALLY SHORT!
Our anti-hero has a freakishly vast knowledge of the music industry!
PRODUCER BOB ROCK ACTUALLY HESITATED ABOUT USING DIGITAL EDITING FOR THE CRÜE'S "DR. FEELGOOD!" IT JUST DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE!
There's just no end to his bizarre fixation on Reagan's decade!
AND WHY IN THE WORLD DID CAPITOL RECORDS GET NILE ROGERS TO DO DURAN DURAN'S FIRST RECORD?
It's an endless torrent!
ROGERS HAD BUILT A CAREER ON BONA FIDE FUNK!
Our anti-hero needs no audience to keep his rant going.
AND YET CAPITOL RECORDS HOOKED HIM UP WITH A BUNCH OF TALENT-LESS AND VERY UNFUNKY BRITS! IT JUST DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE!
Because the audience, of course, is himself.
IT'S ALMOST AS CRAZY AS WHEN MEN AT WORK DECIDED TO GET AWAY FROM THEIR NEW-WAVE GLOSS AFTER THAT "CARGO" RECORD! WHAT WAS UP WITH THAT?
JM

THE GIRL

By Michael Curtiz



"The Girl and the Gun" is a short film directed by local filmmaker Ian Little. The film follows the adventures of a lovely yet mysterious girl, played by Michelle Ferguson, who procures a gun illegally for presumably sinister purposes. After prologue establishes that this girl is probably up to no good, we are taken back in time twice. First, we learn how The Gun came to be in The Girl's possession, then we jump back again to learn how the rather shady characters who supplied The Gun to The Girl came to be in possession of The Gun themselves. We then leap forward in time as the movie hurtles towards its shocking climax.



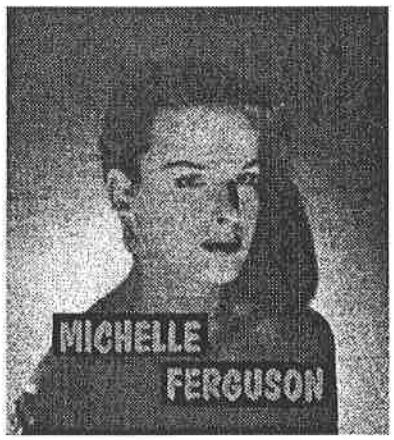
Ian Little has been making movies in his spare time for several years now. He says he has probably made about a dozen altogether, but only three or four that he would be willing to show to anyone. He has created his own library of stock footage, filming various animals that wander onto his property, or anything he comes across that he feels might be visually interesting enough to use in one of his productions. The stock footage is used to great effect in the movie.

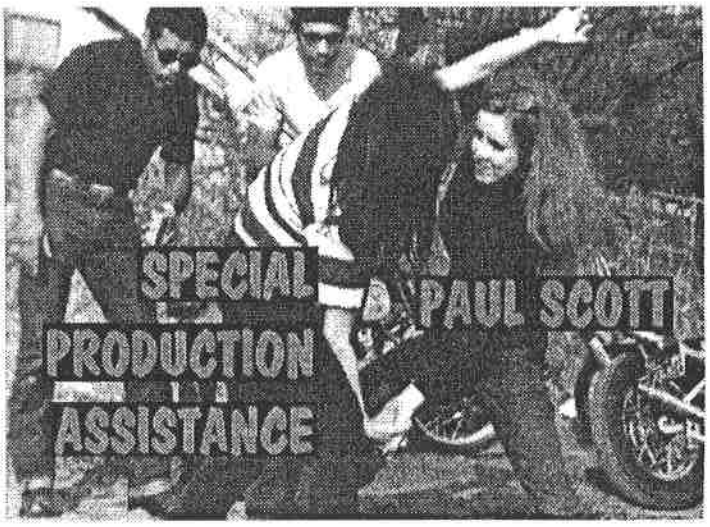
He first started work on "The Girl and the Gun" about a year and a half ago, when he came up with the idea of the movie's opening sequence. At the time, he had no idea where his vision would lead him, but he talked his friend Michelle Ferguson into letting him film her wandering around a graveyard. Over the course of the following months, the screenplay began to take shape and additional scenes were filmed in and around Roanoke. In addition to Michelle, the cast includes Paul Scott as a professional assassin, Ian himself as Paul's partner Lloyd, Gigi the dog, as well as a mysterious black dog, and a star-making turn by Jeremy Kolosine, who

Michael Curtiz is the nom de Fence of a local multimedia celebrity and driving force in the area reactionary art movement for the last decade. He also directed the Academy Award winning film "Casablanca". Reach him at peppermintjack@teenagewildlife.com

learns a valuable lesson in the consequences of tardiness. There is also an uncredited cameo by Tiki the ferret.

In addition to his villainous role, Paul also provided "special production assistance". Paul tells me this involved working with weapons, extension cords, camera, transportation, screenplay, and anything else Ian needed help with during the production. Paul also collaborated with local musician Ian Lloyd on the film's musical soundtrack. Working under the name Space Station Zebra, Paul and Ian used turntables, synthesizers, guitar, and drum machines to create an entirely improvised sound collage that fits well the eerie, disjointed style of the movie. "The Girl and the Gun" is a low-budget affair all the way, in the style of Roger Corman's drive-in school of filmmaking. Ian even makes his own fake blood out of pancake syrup and food coloring. Low budget doesn't always mean low quality, however, and the striking cinematography shows the thought and care that was put into the production. The movie gets its first public screening at the Bacchus Grill on April 15. Meanwhile, Ian and Paul are hard at work on preproduction of their next project, very tentatively titled "Avenging Angel 69".





AND

THE GUN

The Haint

Back home, dad says, the maple sap is rising. He's been tapping trees every morning, but granny's not around to boil it down, so he ended up scorching the first batch. I remember granny would throw a handful of sugar water onto snow, where it would freeze into candy. She always mixed chores with some fun. Nobody likes to husk corn, but granny used to organize husking bees at Nobten Church every autumn. This was a way to get young folks to work. If one of us found a red ear of corn, they could kiss the boy or girl seated next to them. I usually tried to sit next to my second cousin, Naomi Weber, who ended up married at seventeen and was never shy when it came to kissing.

Church teaches children that sex is a sin, and I have carried that guilt. There was a legend told by pap about a haint that fed off the blood from butchered hogs and would smother boys who did dirty things. When I was thirteen and she was twelve, Naomi and I use to sneak off and pretend we were Indians. We mounted the bleached skull of some unfortunate raccoon on a sycamore staff, made a drum from a turtle shell, and chipped flint for arrowheads. I would find feathers and arrange them in Naomi's coarse red hair. When spring came, and our own sap was rising, we became braver and began to streak our cheeks, legs and abdomens with red clay from the spring on Tucker's Ridge.

By midsummer, we were naked except for shorts and shoes. It was then that we started hearing something following us – the haint, thumping as it went, but never close enough for us to see. Instead it circled, always ahead when we trekked forward, always behind when we stopped. Though we were afraid, all of this drove us deeper into the waxy dark greens of spruce and rhododendron, where finally we found our favorite spot. Naomi pointed to a young doe, then whistled through the gap between her front teeth.

"What d'you do that for?"

"I just like to watch them run. She was a fast one. Hardly much to watch when they're gone. When you get out and around as much as me, you see plenty."

"I'm outside every bit as much as you, Naomi. I already showed you how much sun my arms are getting. Wait until harvest, I'11 be blacker than John Brown!"

"Don t you think I'm tan around the face?"

"You're freckly is what you are."

"Well, you re a baby! Don't you think I'm tan around my waist?"

She tugged her shorts down past her hip bones and ran a finger across her white skin, and on a bed of cool moss in an overgrown peach orchard, I lay down on top of her and we were wed by nature.

Once we started it was hard to stop, though in church we started sitting in separate pews, and even around our families we practically stopped acknowledging each other. But when someone suggested that we go outside and play, we would go and sin again. Late in the summer of my thirteenth year, with school looming on the other side of Labor Day, threatening to take our trysts away, Naomi was brave enough to ask if she could sleep over at granny's. No one seemed to suspect anything, and granny let us stay out on the porch after she and pap went in, with the plan that I would sleep on the couch and Naomi in the spare bed. As soon as we heard pap snoring, we let our hands roam. She was afraid of undressing, shaking with fear that we'd get caught, and so she went down on both knees, behind the lilac bush, to take me in her mouth.

I will never forget the vision, as I looked out across the barn-lot from granny's yard and could see the haint floating through standing sheep. It was the strangest shimmering sight, because the only way I could tell it was there was that whatever was on the other side was lit as if through a magical lens, and because this effect was so pronounced that I could make out the haint's shape. It was triangular, a cone, and at the top, where the point ended, it's lines crossed and made a smaller, inverted, open triangle. This thing, nourished by blood and sexual guilt, had taken the shape of our bleeding poles. Naomi felt the goosebumps on my legs, heard my gasp, and thought I was about to come, but I pulled her up and she too could see the thing. It made the noise we had heard all summer - thump, thump, thump - as it slowly circled the sheep. Once the black-n-tans started baying, trying to tear free from their chains, we knew we were seeing something tangible, and we ran up on the porch, creating such a commotion that the light went on in granny s room.

"It's the haint," I trembled when pap came out. "Down by the sheep shed." Pap never questioned me, but turned to grab his boots, a lantern and his .306, then marched off the porch towards the haint. As soon as his light left the porch, the haint retreated. It was across Mack's Run when pap got to the lot, and then it just seemed to fade, not even needing to put any more distance between itself and pap's gun to become a null target.

Nothing was ever said about that night, but our tryst ended nonetheless, for we could tell by the long stare that granny gave as we came in from her porch that we'd been caught. We went to church together the next morning, and granny said it was time to get baptized, and when I walked to the altar, Naomi followed, wanting to make amends. That same afternoon, they took us to the river.

SHORT STORY

By Greg Leatherman

Long slow blades of sunlight fan through a rippled blue sky. I wince on the banks of a raging green river. The current churns, rushing full of grit. The congregation stands stiffly smiling under palomino sycamore trees as I hunch in a blue polyester leisure suit, waiting to be dipped. Reverend Gandy leads me out, far upon the perilous slip stones. The river thuds against my chest. A prayer, and then his hot command fogs onto my face.

"In the Name of The Father," and I am pushed under quick as a shovel, bubbling surprise from my nose. It's to take the tarnish off. And I have to stay down, no matter the full panicky fear, to wash away sins. Suddenly I am collar-snatched and held head up for an instant to see fat jowls shaking and hear, "In the Name of The Son," then whoompsh! Eyes, mouth open, I am shoved deeper into the leechy soup, choking, and seeing the bottom, green and slimy-slick with life. No time to pray, or feel, or do anything but loathe the zealous pressing of Gandy's strong hands upon my shoulders. Held down for so long that I struggle and try to rise and feel him pushing harder until I've no air left. He pulls me up and I dribble river water from my nose and see small white clouds swimming through the aquarium sky.

Gandy squalls to Heaven, "By the Power of the Holy Ghost," plunging me to see the dark dead eyes of long-drowned God in his river-bottom lunacy. Begging only to breathe again and not die and not rot this way with all eyes seeing from the shore in shiny shoes and Sunday suits. I buck and arch to test his grip. I thrash, and roll and see for sure that he is insane and trying to kill me and won't let go for me to breathe. Finally, I give in, and it is then, when all fight has been wrung from me, that he pulls me up and holds me in his big wet arms, and breathes his blessing breath onto me, and I am saved.

I was the catcher in church. After Reverend Gandy anointed the afflicted with oil, clamped a hand on their forehead, and knocked them over with healing, I would ensure that they didn't hit the floor too hard. Inevitably, due perhaps to the delicate constitution of our women, or to Reverend Gandy's handsome visage, there were usually more ladies on the carpet than men. My second duty was to cover exposed legs with little blankets so that those watching would be more impressed with God's word than the shape of Naomi Weber's calves.

In the Brethren church, fellowship and testimony are vital. After a sermon, when we shook hands and shared a word of encouragement, it wasn't hard to notice that Naomi's father, Melvin, had the softest hands in church. And once you noticed his hands, it didn't take much to notice that he also had what appeared to be breasts beneath his shirt. Since he was married and had fathered two lovely daughters, no one thought much about his feminine appearance. It is considered rude to single out an individual due to some physical defect, and we would no more have mentioned Melvin's breasts than we would've the strawberry birthmark on Will Tucker's throat.

Once fellowship ended, Reverend Gandy led us in prayer, then asked if anyone had anything to testify. One Sunday, Melvin testified that he had left his previous church because they preached Matthew 5:29, "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." Based on this, he had stopped on his way home from church at the gas station next to the Chat-n-Chew, asked for the restroom key, attached a straight razor to the door, and slammed it shut, effectively castrating himself.

Mrs. Weber, growing suspicious of how long her husband was gone, asked one of the attendants to check on him. Surgeons were able to reattach the organ. Melvin, however, was determined, so he waited until he was coming home alone from the mill and stopped at the same station. This time he threw the excommunicated member down the hill so it couldn't be found in time for reattachment. Apparently he severed, or at least mangled, his testicles, judging from the severe changes his body was experiencing.

I felt sorry for Naomi after her father's confession. Once anyone began discussing her father's castration, it never took long before someone related that Naomi had been sent home from school in the third grade because of bleeding from her privates. Child Protective Services investigated, but found nothing they considered proof of abuse. It all seemed to make sense, when I thought back to that summer of sex with her, though I never guessed she had been party to the lusts of her father, and I sure didn't think she should have to carry any shame associated with his transgressions. Instead, I began to feel guilty, as if I had coerced her into promiscuity.

Halfway through my sophomore year of high school I was exorcized. I had been calling Naomi, trying to understand us, when I was visited by the haint.. She believed me from the beginning. I would go without sleep, staring into the darkness of my room, daring the haint to come, dreaming of Naomi's curves, cursing her father, pressing erections into the mattress of my bed, and eventually it would appear. The haint floated into my room, portal to another world, making me believe that I, a sinner, was a child of evil.

Promises were made in my mind: that Naomi and I could be together; that we could run off and make a new life and no one would know anything about her, or her father, or us. As soon as I told her this, I realized I had made a mistake. Naomi wasn't ready to leave the hollow, despite the sideways glances and mumbled rumors. She was frightened by my proposals, by the urgency in my voice, and by my visions. And so, less than a month after the haint first appeared in my room, Naomi Weber testified that she had been party to a demonic visitation.

Melvin Weber and the Reverend Gandy came over one evening, bearing bibles and charcoal incense.

"Where are your parents," asked Reverend Gandy.

"They've gone to the auction," I replied.

"Just as well," added Melvin Weber. "You know what we're here for." I knew because Naomi had called to tell me.

"It's not a demon really," I told them. "It's a haint."

"Just tell us when it's here, son. We'll

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The Haint

make sure it doesn't come around anymore." They took me down into the cellar, reluctant to make a mess in mom's living room and desiring a private setting. Reverend Gandy wrote the name Tetragrammaton with a piece of chalk over the threshold of the door. Then he lit the incense in its brass censer and swung it around the room several times. It was cold down there, in the middle of winter with no heat, so Melvin filled a bucket with coals and set them smoldering.

The fumes created an abundance of smoke, but this seemed in character with the holy rite. Solemnly, Reverend Gandy laid hands on me, zealously reciting the bible and speaking in tongues.

"In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues..."

Eventually, the noxious halitose of kindled coals weakened the Reverend's voice, turning it thin, and he equated the vapors with Satan, cursing in the name of God.

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

He made admonitions and pronounced banishments, until I grew frightened and began to believe in what he was doing and swore that I could see the haint descending. And Reverend Gandy traced a circle around me with his crucifix and called on the name of the Lord. I felt a chill leave my body, my mind falling into a void, and found that I was shaking and unable to speak.

"There, there, son. Let Jesus fill you with his love and light." Melvin opened the cellar door to relieve us of the hellish cloud, but it was too late. I was overcome and fell into a slumber that lasted until my parents returned to find us, slumped in the cellar amidst sulfurous fumes. Passing out had saved my life, for Melvin Weber was already dead, his face covered with black soot and a gruesome expression still staring across the room. His hands clutched at his own throat, the nails having scratched the skin, and his tongue was out of his mouth.

The Reverend was unconscious, but he had crawled to the doorway and came out of the ordeal unscathed except for some curious raised weals, as if he'd been struck on his shoulders and back. These wounds, which would disappear for days, only to bleed again each Sunday, convinced many that the haint had been real, though it was fumes that took the life of Naomi's father. After all, the coroner had determined smoke inhalation to be the cause of death. My own spittle was specked with soot for a week, and besides, Reverend Gandy always was one for histrionics.

Naomi and I drifted apart after that. While I had been her closest friend, there was no way she could cry on my shoulder now. I had seen too much. I had seen the death of her father. Perhaps she felt guilty, having told them about my visions, and I was a painful reminder of that guilt. Finally, the little girl who wouldn't even discuss running off with me transferred to another school, somewhere in the southern part of the state, and I never heard from her again.

A Morland Tragedy

By Toby Messer

Although I was born in leafy Kingston-on-Thames, some forty years ago, I spent the majority of my life-affirming and formative years in a small place called Abingdon, in Oxfordshire. There is nothing too remarkable about the town. Thirty, maybe thirty-two thousand inhabitants. The polite and the well to do, the industrious, the craft-oriented, and the odd pocket of country tearaways who live in the villages peppering the town's fringes. Equally near to the bucolic splendour of the South Downs and the gleaming honey-coloured spires of Oxford, Abingdon is neatly cut by the snaking green thread that is the River Thames.

It was, in short, a town that American author Bill Bryson would enjoy, sitting mantis-like in the corner of a tea shop, furiously making notes dealing with bizarre rituals such as Morris dancing (which to this day has yet to be satisfactorily explained to the dancers who participate, let alone anyone else). Or the Sealed Knot Society, or Sealed Nutters as I disrespectfully dubbed them. When the nutters were abroad, women and small children would cower terrified as large armies of the craziest townsfolk would don Cromwellian and Cavalier uniforms and happily discharge muskets and prod each other with large menacing pikestaffs. Naturally, the casualties seemed far greater than the reality of the skirmishes, in which maybe two footsoldiers, a milkmaid and a pig sustained injuries. The bashing and indeed the idiocy of Morris dancing were made all the more enjoyable by vast tidal waves of the elixir of life - Morland's Beer.

Ah, Morland's Beer, excuse me for a second as I drink in the memory of savouring what was and still is a remarkable drop of ale. There was probably a brewhouse in the Benedictine monastery at Abingdon in the 1100s, but Morland's has been in business, at first probably as a farm brewery, only since 1711. The Morland family has now been brewing ale in Abingdon for almost 300 years, with gradually honed skills but with largely the same properties and excellent mellow, fruity and hop-fuelled quality. For several generations of Abingdon menfolk, it has provided an education, a rite of passage for their palate. Say goodbye to the teen queen gazing adoringly down form the bedroom wall, to playing ball in the backyard. It was time to try and grow a wispy moustache over the top-lip zits. Time to sup up and grow up.

When I was just shy of eighteen years, my own father took me to the local pub, called the Boundary House (allegedly the boundary between Abingdon and nearby Oxford). He purposefully leant against the bar in that authoritative and knowing way that men have with total strangers - just as soon as they enter a drinking den - and said the immortal words, "Two pints of Morland's please." In a ritual that had barely changed in hundreds of years, the barman with the slicked-back hair and crumpled, sweat-stained white shirt, bent down, crooked his rolled-up sleeve arm and gave two or three sharp pulls of the brass-topped pump, which was emblazoned with the familiar artist at his easel wielding a loaded palette (the Morland logo is based around George Morland, a famous Georgian landscape painter and infamous Hogarthian lush killed by his excessive drinking). A foaming chestnut-brown liquid gushed geyser-like into the pint glass and settled magically in front of me. My first pint of Morland's. Actually, it wasn't. But I didn't have the heart to tell pops that, like all teenagers going through something of an experimental stage, I had been sampling beer since I was barely sixteen. I was also scared that if

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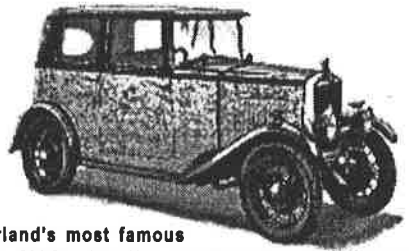
DRINKING

A Morland Tragedy

I admitted to already being a beer drinker, he might fetch me a backhander, tell my mum, or send me up to my bedroom (difficult to do in a pub).

As I reflect on it now, though, many years later, my father was responsible for a vague introduction to the interesting world of alcoholic tinctures. He would brew his own beer from a kit, purchased in Boots the Chemist in Abingdon. Morland's may have consisted of the distilled clear waters of the Thames as part of its considerable composition, but for all I knew, my father's beer on the other hand probably had a stagnant brook at its core. No two of his pints ever tasted the same, and to this day I have yet to taste anything that remotely resembles it. If NASA ever misplaced the formula for rocket fuel, they could do no worse than pop across the pond and visit the old man.



Morland's most famous brew, Old Speckled Hen, is a strong fine ale first brewed in 1929 for the 50th anniversary of the MG car factory. Although the brewery has closed, Old Speckled Hen, brewed using a strain of yeast that Morland has kept alive for over 100 years, might still be available from Healy Wholesale (Fayetteville, NC), Mark Younce Wine Merchant (Durham, NC) or Northern Virginia Beverage (Springfield, VA).

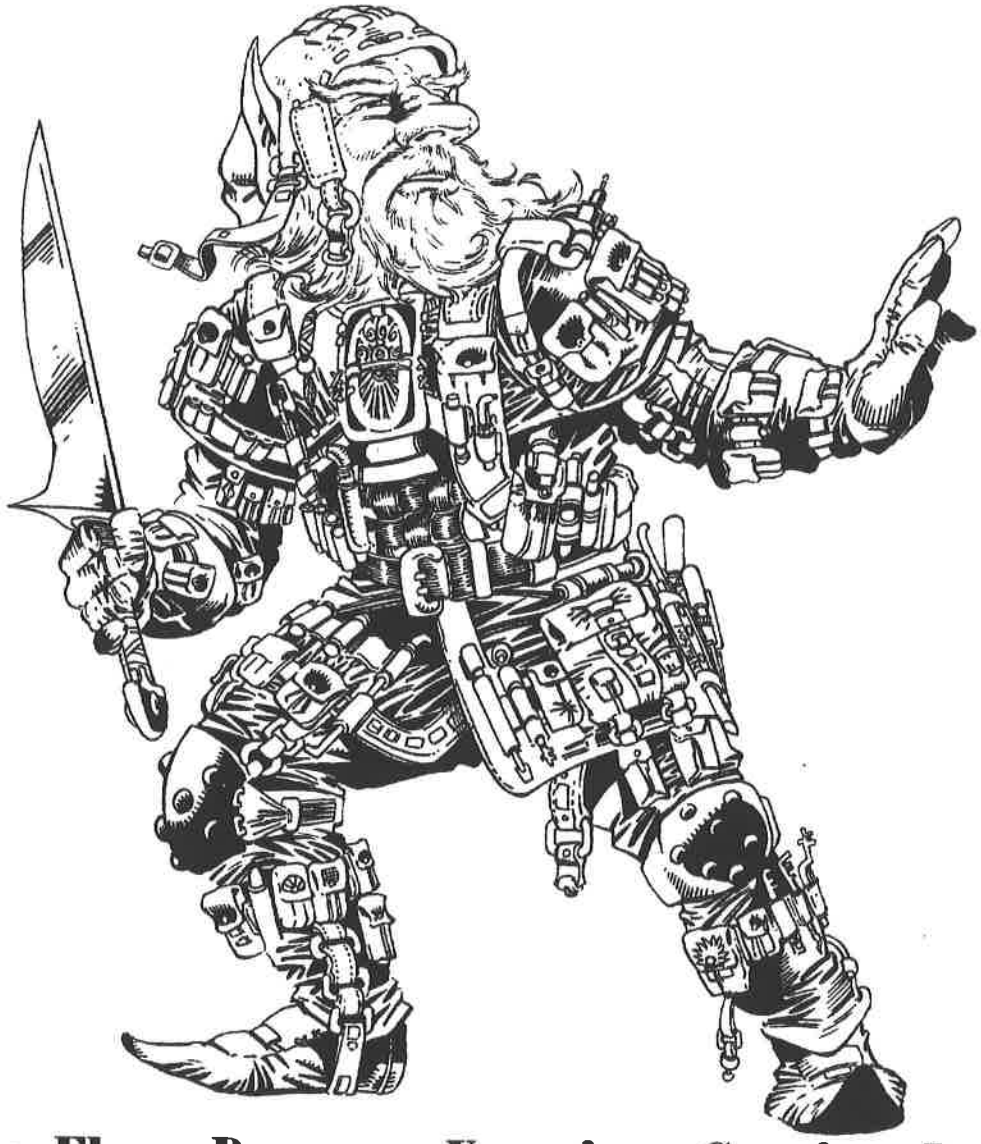
Though no two pints of my Father's brew ever did taste the same, Morland's always did, time after time. However, there was one rather pleasing inconsistency. In brewing lore, British bitter is usually Ordinary (exactly that) or Special, occasionally Best. Special or Best is a superior brew, and thus costs a tiny bit more, for the more robust and polished flavour. The weird thing about Morland's, and I have heard this said many times over the years, is that the Ordinary is better than the Best. Work that one out.

It's more than nostalgia and fond memories that make me call Morland the very essence of Abingdon. The huge malting silos often pumped out unusual and distinct flavours, which would regularly envelop the town in a vast malty blanket. As a kid it reminded me of sausages. Several of my friends worked at the brewery, and they actually exuded the same tell-tale aroma. Rob, an old mate of mine and a brewery man for three years, explained that brewery workers needed to shower twice a day at work, then again at home to get rid of the smell. It was quite alluring, though, that earthy, beery musk. Maybe it was why he was such a hit with the girls. Either that or he was one of the cleanest and most well scrubbed blokes in Abingdon.

Although Morland is the very fabric of Abingdon, sadly it looks like it is going to go the same way of that other famous Abingdon stalwart, the MG sports car. In 1927, MG produced an unusual one-off automobile. Canvas-covered, painted gold and flecked with black, it was used as an MG factory vehicle, and fondly called the "Old Speckled 'un" by local residents. Typical of names passed by word of mouth, this changed over time to the "Old Speckled Hen." As the 50th anniversary of the MG car factory approached (1929), MG asked Morland to produce a special ale to celebrate the event, and Old Speckled Hen was born.

Now, a big regional brewing company has just swallowed Morland. It's a sad day. Britain's second-oldest brewery will close, and many of us, myself included, will be crying in our beer, which, unfortunately, won't be Morland's.

Are you ready for your next adventure?



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